

## **Polyvictimization and the Risk of Harm to Self and Others among Children and Youth**

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**Abstract :** There is a well-established relationship between childhood maltreatment and negative outcomes (e.g., physical and mental health problems, social skill deficits, poor quality of life). The goal of this study was to examine the relationship between polyvictimization (multiple types of trauma) and risk of harm to self and others, taking into account possible age and sex differences. A total of 8980 children and youth were recruited from over 50 mental health facilities across Ontario, Canada. Among this sample, 29% of children and youth had experienced polyvictimization. Results showed that female children and youth who had experienced trauma were at greater risk of harm to themselves, while their male counterparts were at greater risk of harming others. Further, findings from this study highlight that experiencing polyvictimization, regardless of age or sex, increased the risk of harm to self and others. These findings add to extant literature as to the cumulative relationship between polyvictimization and risk in relation to harming oneself or others. Further, results from this study have significant implications for assessment and care-planning for those children and youth presenting with a trauma background.

**Keywords :** children's mental health, polyvictimization, risk of harm, sex differences

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